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Security Council

Fifty-first Year

Provisional

3648th Meeting
Tuesday, 9 April 1996, 11 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Somavía	(Chile)
Members:	Botswana	Mr. Legwaila
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	Egypt	Mr. Elaraby
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Germany	Mr. Rudolph
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Queta
	Honduras	Mr. Martínez Blanco
	Indonesia	Mr. Wisnumurti
	Italy	Mr. Terzi di Sant'agata
	Poland	Mr. Włosowicz
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Gnehm

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

96-85373 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178

The meeting was called to order at 11.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Argentina, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Ghafoorzai (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Cárdenas (Argentina), Mr. Shah (India), Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Konishi (Japan), Mr. Razali (Malaysia), Mr. Kamal (Pakistan), Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan), Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia), Mr. Çelem (Turkey), Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan) and Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 8 April 1996 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Guinea to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that the Security Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Ambassador Engin A. Ansay, Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, during the Council's discussion of the item entitled 'The situation in Afghanistan'."

That letter has been issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/1996/252.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 to His Excellency Mr. Engin Ansay.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on the agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

The first speaker is the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mr. Abdul-Rahim Ghafoorzai, on whom I now call.

Mr. Ghafoorzai (Afghanistan): I should like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of April. We all know the outstanding contributions you have made to the work of the United Nations, especially during the many United Nations gatherings over which you have presided, at which your wisdom and patience have been recognized.

I should also like to pay a special tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Legwaila of Botswana, who presided with ability and wisdom over the Security Council meetings held during the month of March.

Allow me to extend to you, Sir, and to each member of the Council, my delegation's appreciation for the convening of this orientation debate on Afghanistan, as well as for the opportunity provided to the delegation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan to address the Council.

The nations that are determined to live independently and free from alignment, as positive elements of world peace and tranquillity, have placed their trust and hope in the United Nations Organization. This trust is placed in particular in the obligations under the Charter of the Security Council, which bears the crucial task of the maintenance of global and regional peace and stability.

Quite naturally, it is primarily the Security Council that sovereign nations look to whenever there is a threat

to the peace or a breach of the peace with an act of aggression.

Therefore, the delegation of Afghanistan has been looking for such an opportunity to have the voice of the Afghans heard by this Council. The Afghan delegation would like to ask the Council why the people of Afghanistan, who have been the victims of aggression and foreign interference since 1978, have once again been exposed to a conspiracy and foreign military intervention. Why has the civilian population — including women, children and the elderly, especially in the capital, Kabul — which has long undergone hardships, bereavement, deprivation, hunger and homelessness, come constantly under inhuman rocket attacks and sometimes aerial bombardment, by the mercenaries called "Taliban", causing deaths, injuries and destruction?

Yes, the Afghan nation, after enduring the sacrifice of 1.7 million human lives, contributed to, among the most important factors, the diminishing of the threat of a nuclear confrontation, the end of the cold war, the preservation of human values and the further strengthening of the framework of a world order based on democracy and human rights. This nation deserves sympathy from the world community. It should have been supported in its national endeavours aimed at overcoming the problems left by 17 years of war, as well as in the serious challenges it faces in its reconstruction.

Ironically, we note with anguish that, over the last four years, conspirators and interventionists linked to Pakistani military intelligence circles, sometimes in connivance with other outside supporters, have been attempting to overthrow the Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan and to enthrone a Pakistani-approved regime in Kabul. This hostile and unjust scheme has given rise to a renewed, widespread Afghan resistance, while creating legitimate concern for the countries of the region.

It is common knowledge that the motive behind convening this meeting is not to make allegations, but, rather, to seek a trusted and credible way out of the ongoing conflict in my country, Afghanistan. However, since identifying the root causes of the conflict is an indispensable prerequisite for a genuine search for a lasting, credible and comprehensive solution, we must elaborate on and analyse the factors shaping the conflict.

I cannot but underscore briefly the unfriendly, and indeed hostile, behaviour of those Pakistani intelligence circles, acting against the most sincere will of the Pakistani nation and their valued historical and moral capital — namely, the fraternity of the Afghan people.

Pakistani circles, led by the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), the military intelligence service, jeopardize peace through hypocritical attempts masquerading as efforts for peace, and supplement the tension by fanning the flame of ethnic hatred among our people. These circles sponsor meetings, gatherings and ventures, with the hope of forging an anti-Government coalition, to attempt to assault Kabul and to sabotage an inter-Afghan dialogue which would be conducive to national reconciliation and reconstruction.

Since the establishment in April 1992 of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, Pakistani military intelligence circles have covertly been working towards their goal by supporting, provoking and stirring up their stooges to seize power in Kabul. This malicious conspiracy has caused vast devastation and human losses. The inter-Afghan dialogues were once sabotaged outright. The world witnessed the abortive *coup* attempt of 1 January 1994 against the Islamic State of Afghanistan by armed groups, some of them quartered on Pakistani soil. During the *coup*, more than 3,000 rockets were showered on the innocent inhabitants of Kabul and on residential targets in the city. These acts of aggression took over 4,000 innocent lives and wounded approximately 8,000 people, mostly women and children.

Pakistani military and intelligence elements were physically involved in that abortive *coup* attempt and brutal attack on Kabul. The Government captured 25 heavily armed Pakistani militiamen; they were later released to His Highness Prince Turki Al Faisal, Minister of National Security of Saudi Arabia, who, in a goodwill mission, visited Kabul to secure their release.

Furthermore, on different occasions, including during recent weeks, as a gesture of good will on the part of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, a considerable number of captured Pakistani saboteurs and spies have been released. As related in our statement before the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, some still remain in our custody: their names and descriptions appear in document A/50/PV.95.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Security Council very briefly to some hard evidence of the interventions of Pakistani intelligence circles in Afghanistan.

First, Pakistani military intelligence, coupled with the Pakistani Ministry of the Interior, created in September 1994 a group of mercenaries called Taliban. This group was trained in Quetta, Pakistan, and sent into Afghanistan along with Pakistani intelligence officers and Pakistani frontier militia. The evidence and facts proving the Taliban to be a creation of the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) and the Pakistani Ministry of the Interior can be found in the statement made by the Afghan delegation on 19 December 1995 before the 95th plenary meeting of the General Assembly (A/50/PV.95), and also in international news media reports.

Secondly, during 1995 and early 1996, Pakistani aeroplanes transporting arms and ammunition violated on numerous occasions the airspace of Afghanistan and landed in Kandahar, Shindand and Herat airports. Some instances of these violations were identified before the General Assembly, as contained in document A/50/PV.95.

Thirdly, on 28 September 1995, the Pakistani state-run Telecommunication Corporation, without the agreement of the Afghan Central Government, laid new telephone cables for military occupation purposes in southern and western Afghanistan.

Fourthly, on 9 December 1995, when the Government of Pakistan decided to site its Embassy in Jalalabad, the administrative centre of the eastern Afghan province of Nangarhar, that decision was taken, like others before it, unilaterally and without consultation with the Afghan Government. The Pakistani Government also decided to send Ambassador Qazi Homayun and staff members of the Embassy to Jalalabad. It is ironic to note that Mr. Qazi Homayun had been accredited as Pakistani Ambassador to the Government of Afghanistan in the capital city, Kabul. He had been received by President Rabbani and had presented his credentials to him.

Fifthly, on 5 November 1995, Mr. Sardar Aseff Ahmad Ali, Pakistani Minister for Foreign Affairs, accompanied by Ambassador Qazi Homayun, paid a sudden visit to Mazar-i-Sharif in the northern province of Balkh of Afghanistan, for "negotiations" with Mr. Abdul-Rashid Dostum, a military leader of the opposition. The visit took place without prior information being communicated to the Afghan Government, in violation of all recognized international norms.

Sixthly, as a result of the recent endeavours of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, sustained dialogue for further broadening the base of the Government, as well as consolidation of the political process in the country, has taken place. Consequently, initial agreement among the three members of the opposition coalition was secured.

To sabotage Kabul's efforts, the Pakistani authorities, on 7 February 1996, convened a special three-day gathering of the Afghan opposition in Islamabad. Red-carpet treatment was given to the leaders of the opposition groups. By this notorious manoeuvre, Pakistani authorities managed to foil the initial understandings reached between the Government and the opposition.

The correspondents of renowned newspapers around the world have recorded the statements of their eyewitnesses concerning the direct involvement of Pakistani conspirators and saboteurs in the internal affairs of our country. Here, on the record, I should like to mention a few examples, from among many, of the Pakistani newspapers' and politicians' views about Pakistan's intervention in Afghanistan.

As early as 20 October 1995, a prominent Pakistani newspaper, *Dawn*, featured an editorial written by a senior Pakistani political analyst and writer, Mr. M. Baqir Naqvi. Analysing the root causes of the conflict, the editorial says,

> "politicians in Islamabad would do well to pause and ponder ... that the Taliban's umbilical cord to Pakistan has been visible to all".

The ideas expressed by Mr. Naqvi were confirmed after thorough study by the well-known American journalist and analyst Mr. John Burns, who in *The New York Times* of 27 March 1996 says that

> "after 18 months of covert military and financial backing for a guerrilla group that has imposed Muslim fundamentalist rule on more than half of Afghanistan, Pakistan appears to have shifted towards a policy that aims to bring an end to the civil war".

The article continues,

> "for years Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan conflict has been managed by an assortment of civilian and military agencies that have often worked at cross purposes, so the change has not been clear-cut. Some officials, including the powerful Interior Minister, Nasirullah Babar, still strongly

support the Afghan fundamentalist group, Taliban, while others, including officials in Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's office, condemn the fundamentalists for their hard-line policies towards women and their brutal law-and-order policies."

The article also says that

"Senior Pakistani officials have acknowledged that there have been second thoughts about the consequences for Pakistan of a Taliban government in Kabul, which might foment Muslim fundamentalism, and possibly even secessionism, in Pakistani-ruled tribal areas bordering Afghanistan."

The Pakistani newspaper *Nation*, on 3 December 1995, published an article entitled "Punjab wants Lahore Rule in Afghanistan", which reads

"Quetta — Mahmood Khan Achakzai, Member of the Pakistan National Assembly and the Chairman of the Pakhtoon Khawa Milli Awami Party (PMAP), while accusing the Punjab and Inter-Service Intelligence of the destruction of Afghanistan, claimed 'Both want to impose the rule of Lahore over Kabul through the Taliban'".

There can be no in-depth consideration of the situation in Afghanistan without a realistic analysis of the newly emerged group called the Taliban, whose name means students of religious schools, and its political and social agenda.

In all Islamic countries there are many religious schools known as *madrassas*, as well as other educational institutions, where various subjects related to the Islamic religion are taught. The purpose of these schools and institutions is to prepare Muslim youth to work for religious services on behalf of their countrymen. In no *madrassa* in the Islamic world are taught the arts of modern warfare, such as the usage of artillery and rockets and the flying of helicopter gunships and jet fighters. This type of education is the work of military academies.

The Taliban claim that they want to implement "Islamic teachings". Unfortunately, their conception of Islamic precepts is far from the genuine principles of Islam. They believe that cutting off a hand and a foot of a man or woman accused of being a thief is imperative, without adequate investigation or proof and without the right of the accused to be defended in a fair trial. They do not want to recognize that the application of these punitive norms, known as *hadd* in genuine Islamic jurisprudence, requires that appropriate and strict conditions be met.

The main and most dangerous precept of the Taliban is to forbid girls and women to come out of their houses. According to the Taliban, for a female, going to school is un-Islamic. Women teachers are ordered to refrain from teaching in schools. Many of these female instructors were also teaching in boys' primary schools. Many boys' primary schools have even been closed under Taliban rule because of the absence of the female teachers.

Women are not allowed to work anywhere outside their homes. Herat — one of the most famous cities of Islam since the second century of *Hijra*, where schools for girls existed for many centuries — and other towns in the provinces of Kandahar, Nimroz and Farah are now deprived of women's education. These cities are condemned by Taliban rule to maintain their female populations in darkness and ignorance and even to be deprived of the Islamic knowledge taught in women's schools throughout Afghanistan. Since the young girls are to be wives and mothers, they will not be able to provide adequate Islamic teaching to their children in the framework of their families, and that is a very important concept in an Islamic society. This obviously leads an Islamic society to degradation and cultural downfall. The Taliban, however, do not understand these facts and claim to monopolize the absolute truth and righteousness of Islam.

Christiane Amanpour of CNN reported on 3 April 1995 from Herat that a group of armed Taliban had broken into homes in Herat province and smashed tape-recorders and VCRs, arguing that religion forbids these devices. According to the report, armed Taliban in the streets of Herat stop vehicles and search for stereos. Television owners are sometimes seen in the streets with their smashed televisions and cassettes hanging from their necks. This act has been called "TV execution". The report on television also covered the scene of protest of as many as 30 veiled Afghan women on a street, demanding the opening of the girls' schools.

In the wake of these extreme attitudes, the United Nations Children's Fund and many non-governmental organizations have lately discontinued their operations in the areas under the military occupation of the Taliban.

The attention of the Council is hereby drawn to the fact that, contrary to the negative and ruthless conduct of

the Taliban with regard to human rights, especially those of women, the situation is completely different in the areas under the administration of the Government. This has been reported by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights for Afghanistan (A/50/567, annex). In these areas, women are actively participating in the political, social and economic life of the country. There are 383 women officers in the Afghan army, ranging in rank from Lieutenant-General to captains and pilots. Many women diplomats are in the foreign service, enjoying co-education at the university level.

It is my sad duty to draw the Council's attention to a looming catastrophe threatening our region and beyond: the cultivation, processing and trafficking of narcotics in Afghanistan, which are widening dreadfully under Taliban rule and have assumed dangerous dimensions. Poppy cultivation in the areas held by the Taliban has dramatically increased. In addition to the cultivation of poppies on the outskirts of Herat, hundreds of new acres of land between Gereshk and Herat are now producing poppies.

It is a matter of serious concern that, according to reliable reports, the Taliban, with the support of the politico-military Mafia of the adjacent country, have been able to get their hands on advanced portable drug-processing and refining machines that even produce morphine and heroin. These machines have so far been set up in Helmand and Kandahar. Accordingly, for the first time in the history of Afghanistan, opium is now being processed into morphine and heroin inside the country, in the Taliban-controlled areas. According to the report, in the past five months more than 200 tons of narcotics have been exported outside Afghanistan from the areas controlled by the Taliban. As a result, the Taliban have an additional source of income to continue their military operations, which, according to them, are the only means of achieving their goals and objectives.

It is interesting to note that in mid-February 1996 two correspondents from *The Times* of London visited Herat. There they met with senior Taliban officials and the "governor of the province". On returning from Herat to Kabul, the correspondents confirmed Government reports regarding the dramatic increase in the cultivation of narcotics in the province. They also added that the Turkmenistan authorities had officially admitted having arrested 500 Taliban on the charge of illicit drug-smuggling into Turkmenistan.

The British journalists had "funny experiences" in Herat as well. When they asked the "governor's" permission to take pictures of the city, the "governor" denied it because they were non-believers. The "governor" requested them to convert to Islam first, after which he would grant them permission to take as many pictures as they wanted. When the "governor" was asked why the administration was not banning the cultivation and trafficking of illicit drugs, his reply was "too simple": because drugs end up in Europe and the United States they are endangering only the lives of *Kafirs* — the unfaithful. Drug trafficking is therefore a "holy trade".

Concrete experience elsewhere in today's human societies has proved that drug trafficking practised by armed groups automatically brings organized crime, banditry and terrorism; the case of the Taliban in Afghanistan, is no exception for the following reasons.

First, bearing in mind the tendency of the Taliban to aim for the possession of power and their reluctance even to share power with the other parties, should they fail to achieve what they are promised, they will naturally resort to terrorism as a means of revenge.

Secondly, the Taliban are currently in a series of close contacts with some fundamentalist groups, such as Sepah-e-Sahaba in Pakistan, that are inclined to practise armed hostilities against other sects.

Thirdly, the possession of military bases, together with operational fields inside Afghanistan, would further provide them with the chance to expand throughout the region and even beyond.

Fourthly, complementary to the trends towards, and a certain agenda for, terrorism, a terrorist group needs to accumulate funds and weapons, with which Taliban seem to have already been well supplied.

The promoters of the Taliban, both those close by and those linked at a distance, unequivocally believed that deploying this group would secure them a permanent influence in Afghanistan. Our estimation is that since the emergence of the Taliban in September 1994 a vast budget, probably exceeding $2 billion, has been channelled through and by Pakistani intelligence circles to this group.

They have consequently managed to secure a tyrannical military presence in a number of provinces of Afghanistan, while hatred and resentment of their uncivilized and retrograde practices has been on the rise among civilians. With the passing of time, the real nature

of Taliban and their links with foreign quarters have become known to our countrymen. Even in the rank and file of Taliban themselves, this fact has been sometimes been resented and objections have been voiced. The disclosure of the facts has caused discontent and a centrifugal trend among those Taliban who are patriots and who had participated in good faith in the actions of these retrograde mercenaries.

Let me now turn to the ongoing peace process in Afghanistan and the United Nations Special Mission's contribution to it. The people and the Government of Afghanistan are thankful to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and to the Head of the Special Mission, His Excellency Ambassador Mahmoud Mestiri, and his colleagues for their continuous endeavours aimed at achieving a lasting peace in Afghanistan. The Afghan Government also highly appreciates the valuable endeavours undertaken and the role played by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The efforts of His Excellency Mr. Hamid Algabid, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Ambassador Ibrahim S. Bakr, Special Representative of the OIC Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and Ambassador Engin Ansay, the Special Envoy of the OIC for Afghanistan, are to be mentioned with gratification.

We are committed to cooperating with the United Nations Special Mission in order to enable it to succeed in accomplishing its mandate. It is on the basis of this commitment as well as our realization that we bear a historic responsibility to defend our national sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity that we have to point out some shortcomings in the endeavours of the Special Mission. We hope these shortcomings will be remedied soon. There has been a failure: first, explicitly to identify foreign interference as the root cause of the conflict and to recommend effective measures to terminate it — although it is a matter of gratification to see that paragraph 17 of the recent report of the Secretary-General (A/50/908) cites foreign interference as one of the outstanding causes of the continuation of the conflict; secondly, to identify and observe a logical sequence for the stages of the peace process on a pragmatic and realistic basis, which should include the transitional period required for a political process to generate an overall negotiated settlement; and thirdly, adequately and in a timely manner to identify the true nature of the mercenaries called Taliban at the time of their emergence in September 1994, and subsequently, when their objectives became clear in early 1995, to reveal their well-known foreign linkage.

Casting an eye over earlier peacemaking activities of the United Nations in other areas of the world such as Cambodia, Angola, El Salvador and so forth, we realize that to some degree there is a unified pattern for peacemaking operations that has been carried out step by step. The first step in all these patterns, as we stated before the General Assembly, is to distinguish the status of the parties in an internal conflict, namely the Government and the insurgent forces. This makes it possible to ascertain their views on a negotiated political settlement. Through the whole process, any United Nations mission needs to maintain its strict impartiality. Generally, the continuous contacts and delicate negotiations with the main actors lead to a formal agreement among the parties, which usually includes, *inter alia*, two chapters: political and military.

The political chapter includes agreements on an immediate cease-fire, structure of power during the transitional period, transfer of power, electoral law, the holding of elections, adoption of a constitution, and so forth. The military chapter of such an agreement generally deals with disengagement, the demobilization of irregular forces, and the building of a national security force.

We understand that in all peacemaking operations, after securing a genuine positive national environment conducive to peace, the United Nations, as an honest broker, develops a practical and pragmatic approach to ensure an overall agreement and to supervise its implementation. However, in Afghanistan it seems that the United Nations Special Mission — in spite of the rich experience of past United Nations peacemaking activities, in the absence of a political agreement and of due consideration for elements and factors that are imperative for a peaceful political process — has in the past been emphasizing only one element, namely, the transfer of power. This approach might give one the impression that the Mission has lost sight of other major elements and stages as basic components of the peace process and as prerequisites for a durable, just and credible political settlement.

The Afghan Government has welcomed the strengthening of the United Nations Special Mission through the appointment of four new advisers to directly assist Ambassador Mestiri in his highly arduous and complex task. The peace process in Afghanistan, because of its intricate nature, will be better facilitated now that the Mission enjoys the experience and technical advice of this outstanding group of experts.

However, the failure of the Special Mission to identify the actual stumbling block in the way of the United Nation peace endeavours has always been one of the causes delaying the momentum of the peace process. For instance, Taliban leaders on various occasions have castigated the United Nations role in Afghanistan as "futile and vain". They have also rejected any form of negotiation with the Government.

As recently as last week, with the help of Pakistani circles, the Taliban convened a gathering called a *shura*, or council, in Kandahar. It is again with dismay that I note that, according to reliable reports, at 9.30 a.m. on 29 March 1996 a Pakistani 143-type military transport aeroplane, departing from Karachi, landed at Kandahar airport, bringing a Pakistani political and intelligence delegation which took part in the organization and the convening of that council. In addition, the participants in this *shura*, or council, were brought to Kandahar by aeroplanes and trucks from Pakistan.

This gathering was held with arrogance, and without the participation of any of the main Afghan groups. The final resolution of the Kandahar council, adopted on 3 April 1996, declared Akhound Molla Mohammed Omar, the nominal head of the Taliban, "*Amir al-Mominin* — the ruler of the faithful", a title not claimed since the end of the Ottoman Caliphate in Istanbul. The content of this decision indicates the pretension of the Taliban to extend their rule not only in Afghanistan but also into neighbouring Islamic countries.

This burlesque and extravagant meeting was condemned not only by the Afghan Government but also by the opposition other than Taliban.

All along, the Taliban's dogmatic abstention from negotiations has been based mostly, we believe, upon their possession of the fire-power constantly provided them by Pakistani intelligence circles, typified, among numerous instances, by the Taliban's reported receipt of new Pakistani long-range rockets.

As large a city as Kabul, the capital and home to over a million innocent citizens doomed to horrible bereavements, gives testimony to the crimes of the Taliban, who every day open new files of atrocities.

In the past the Afghan delegation has presented accounts of the violation of international humanitarian law by the Taliban. The following is a brief report of rocket attacks on civilian targets in the capital, Kabul, perpetrated by the Taliban. This is, and should be, a matter of serious concern for the Security Council.

First, in late December 1995, the Taliban fired over 205 rockets at the residential areas of Kabul, killing 25 civilians and wounding 47 others, while many houses sustained serious damage.

Secondly, during January 1996 Taliban mercenaries launched as many as 331 rockets on residential areas of Kabul, resulting in the loss of 60 lives, and leaving 225 civilians wounded and 65 houses demolished.

Thirdly, during February 1996 a total of 71 rockets were showered on Kabul civilian targets, killing 12 people and injuring 54 others, while leaving 11 houses destroyed.

Fourthly, during March 1996 they launched 111 rockets on the residential areas of Kabul, killing 31 inhabitants, wounding 44 and inflicting serious damage upon 23 houses.

Fifthly, this month as many as 149 rockets have been launched by Taliban, killing 34 people, wounding 114 and destroying 22 houses.

In addition, as a result of a Taliban aerial bombardment on 23 December 1995 33 citizens of the city of Kabul were martyred. That number includes seven professional film-makers whose production studio took a direct hit, as well as nine children; 140 were wounded. As many as 40 children have not been accounted for.

On 28 January 1996 Taliban bombarded central parts of the capital, resulting in the loss of 10 citizens and leaving many others wounded.

On 6 February 1996 a Taliban jet fighter dropped three 250-kg bombs on residential sectors of the city. Happily, this time no casualties were involved.

Elaboration of those facts and references to unfriendly attitudes in Pakistani circles do not necessarily imply an intention on the part of the Islamic State of Afghanistan to advocate an antagonistic attitude towards the central Government and the people of Pakistan.

The principled foreign policy of Afghanistan requires sincere friendship and cooperation with all States, and with neighbouring countries in particular.

We are of the conviction that only such an atmosphere will give our nation the opportunity to reconstruct its war-ravaged country.

We remain indebted to the fraternal, friendly Pakistani nation, which stood by us in our days of trial. This was a chapter of history during which the Afghan nation exerted itself to fight not only to defend itself, but for the benefit of countries far beyond which were in the way of the former Soviet Union's southward thrust, including Pakistan and other countries in the region and perhaps the entire free world, shielding them from potential threat. As we have stated on numerous occasions, we would like to re-establish close and friendly ties with Pakistan. Obviously, this means that ties are to be based upon mutual respect for sovereignty national unity and territorial integrity and on non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

Afghanistan, together with Pakistan, can play a significant role in strengthening and broadening cooperation between all countries in the economic as well as the cultural fields. We believe that an effective realization of regional cooperation, coordinated by the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), cannot be achieved without a peaceful and cooperative relationship between the two countries.

Pakistani circles, in a barren attempt to justify the naked interventions of the ISI in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, have long accused the Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan of receiving military assistance from certain countries. For the sake of the record of this Council, I should like to elucidate the fact that if the Government of Afghanistan had not been committed to the preservation of its sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and the need for a perpetual non-alignment policy, no reasons to endure such sacrifices, pains and rigours would have remained.

For the Government of Afghanistan, an aggressor of any sect or philosophy, Muslim or non-Muslim, neighbour or non-neighbour, is regarded as nothing but an aggressor.

Afghanistan, as a sovereign State, reserves its legitimate right to seek the assistance — political, moral, and humanitarian — of any country, near or far, in conformity with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, and based upon internationally recognized principles. We assure the Council that, despite the unbearable hardships resulting from foreign interference, conspiracies and diverse other acts, Afghanistan has not entered into any commitment, regional or beyond, which would pose a threat to the national security of the countries in the region or jeopardize in any way the non-aligned status of Afghanistan. We remain committed to this policy.

We are further of the conviction that an end to these blatant interventions would pave the way for peaceful endeavours by the United Nations Special Mission to bring about a far-reaching and just solution to the destructive conflict in Afghanistan.

We believe that it is high time for both the Afghan and Pakistani Governments to immediately start serious dialogue and negotiation for the restoration of mutual trust and a cooperative relationship that would definitely contribute to the creation of a sound atmosphere conducive to the restoration of peace in Afghanistan.

A well-known philosopher and poet of the sub-continent, Alama iqbal, has said:

> "The essence of Asia is a moving mixture.
> Of that blend, the Afghan nation is the core.
> Its tranquillity is Asia's peace, and
> Its turmoil is Asia's turbulence."

Afghanistan, due to the interference that I have described, is in turmoil. The peace and stability of the region, as recognized by the Security Council in its statement to the press of 13 December 1995, is in jeopardy. The Security Council, on the basis of the mandate the Charter has given it, as well as the expectations of the suffering nation of Afghanistan, should focus its attention and take an appropriate decision to remedy the situation.

At this stage I wish to present three specific suggestion for the consideration of the Council.

The first is to establish a United Nations monitoring post along the southern border point of Speen Boldak between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The monitoring post would halt the flow of illicit arms and ammunition inside Afghanistan into the hands of the Taliban mercenaries. This would undoubtedly contribute to achieving the objective of the General Assembly resolution of 19 December 1995, and in this particular case would perform a deterrent role in minimizing the tension and the scope of the armed conflicts. Perhaps the existing military personnel of the Office of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan (OSGA) could be promptly assigned to

do the job. There is an imperative need for their presence in the south of the country.

Secondly, the United Nations should send a fact-finding mission to the Taliban-occupied provinces in Afghanistan in order, first, to observe the magnitude of the Pakistani military intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, and, secondly, to investigate the cultivation, processing and illicit trafficking of narcotics in the Taliban-occupied areas.

As for the Taliban and drug trafficking, Afghanistan has prepared a detailed and elaborate report covering the cultivation, processing and trafficking of narcotics, especially in the south and south-western provinces of Afghanistan. That is an alarming new phenomenon. The report is to be submitted to the United Nations drug control authorities for appropriate action.

The fact-finding mission would also verify the wide range of reports of human rights violations, especially against women, in the areas occupied by Taliban, and it would study and evaluate, to the extent possible, the situation and circumstances in the Taliban-controlled areas in respect of institutionalized criminal and terrorist activities.

Thirdly, as I reported in my letter dated 14 September 1995 to the Secretary-General (S/1995/795), following the events of 6 September 1995 Pakistani military transport planes and transport vehicles began the systematic transfer of heavy and light weaponry — belonging to the Afghan Ministry of Defence — from Herat towards Quetta, Pakistan. Some of these weapons have since been handed over to the Taliban mercenaries. The bulk of these arms that were plundered by the Pakistani Army are still in Quetta. The Security Council should take appropriate steps for the early return of these arms, which belong to Afghanistan.

I would mention that, in my letter of 14 September, the Islamic State of Afghanistan reserved its right to take, in due time, appropriate legal action on the international level against Pakistan in order to secure the return of these armaments.

I shall conclude with the saying that the difference between a saint and a sinner is that the saint has a past and the sinner has a future. In terms of their attitude towards the Afghan nation, the Pakistani authorities should try to use the future to restore the trust and confidence of the Afghan people.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): First of all, allow me, Mr. President, to congratulate you on your assumption of the important post of President of the Security Council. We believe that, with your wisdom, experience and outstanding ability, you will most certainly be able to guide the work of the Council this month to a satisfactory conclusion.

I also wish to thank the previous President, the Permanent Representative of Botswana, Mr. Legwaila, for his successful stewardship of the Council's work last month.

Afghanistan has been and remains mired in prolonged strife; the situation there is turbulent and unstable, and has resulted in enormous losses to the Afghan people in terms of life and property; also, it poses a threat to the surrounding countries and to the area, and jeopardizes regional security and stability.

Afghanistan is a neighbour of China's; the Chinese Government and people are concerned about the situation there, and hope that Afghanistan will end the strife as soon as possible and embark on national reconstruction. The crux of the problem of Afghanistan lies in the lack of even minimal trust between the factions, and in their unwillingness to renounce the use of force in resolving their problems.

At the same time, foreign interference in the Afghan question and the transfer of arms to that country have complicated the issue, so that it has dragged on for a long time now without solution.

For a genuine settlement of the Afghan question, we are of the view that the factions in Afghanistan should, firstly, implement a cease-fire, establish mutual trust and so create conditions for a peaceful settlement. Secondly, with the assistance of the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and Afghanistan's neighbours, the Afghan parties should conduct peaceful negotiations and consultations in order to find a satisfactory solution unhampered by ethnic, religious and political differences. All countries should abide by United Nations resolutions, respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, refrain from interference in its internal affairs and prevent transfers of weapons to it.

China has always attached great importance to the question of Afghanistan. In the past, the Afghan people have faced the issues of aggression and resistance to aggression; as is in accordance with its consistent position, China has supported the Afghan people in their just struggle to safeguard their national sovereignty and independence.

However, after the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, the Afghan question became essentially an internal problem. The Chinese Government has consistently opposed the notion of any country's interfering in the internal affairs of another, and we are of course against foreign interference in Afghan internal affairs: foreign interference in the Afghan question can only complicate the problem.

We commend the United Nations, the OIC and the countries concerned on their positive efforts, which we support, towards restoring peace in Afghanistan. We support also the relevant United Nations resolutions on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and on the right of the Afghan people to determine their own destiny, and we hope that all countries will abide by those resolutions. Also, we sincerely hope that the Afghan parties will put the interests of the country and the people first, set aside their past differences, end their armed conflict and, through friendly dialogue and consultations, achieve national reconciliation and stability so that the Afghan people can begin to rebuild their homes at the earliest possible date and live and work in peace and security.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the Representative of China for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Wisnumurti (Indonesia): Mr. President, allow me first of all to express my delegation's congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I am convinced that your leadership and diplomatic skill will ensure that the Council's work this month is productive.

I wish also to express my delegation's deep appreciation to the previous President, Mr. Legwaila, the Permanent Representative of Botswana, for the excellent manner in which he led the work of the Council last month.

My delegation is gratified that the situation in Afghanistan is now being discussed in this formal meeting of the Security Council. It has become all the more urgent to do so given the backdrop of a rapidly deteriorating situation in the internecine civil strife, which has already taken a heavy toll in human lives and has wrought material devastation. This meeting also offers an opportunity for the non-members of the Council to speak on an issue which has for so long defied rational solution.

It is with deepening concern that Indonesia has witnessed the continuing armed hostilities in Afghanistan, in which hundreds of thousands of people have been killed, maimed, disabled or displaced. Factionalism and ethnic divides threaten to fragment the country permanently. Further compounding the situation is the coincidence of acute humanitarian conditions with a virtual deadlock in the endeavours to seek a political solution to end this tragic crisis. Hence the gravity of the situation, not only for the people of Afghanistan but also in terms of its ramifications for the region and beyond, cannot be overemphasized.

My delegation is fully aware of the important initiatives taken by this Council and the Secretary-General to deal in a comprehensive manner with the complex dimensions of this conflict. In this context, we particularly welcome the renewed efforts made by the Secretary-General, including the dispatch of Ambassador Mahmoud Mestiri as Head of the Special Mission to the region and his proposal for the establishment of a forum or mechanism representing the various warring factions to which power would be transferred. Such a modality would also constitute a critical component in resolving other contentious issues, such as the establishment of an interim government, security and the demilitarization of Kabul. These were envisioned as the essential first steps towards the restoration of normalcy throughout Afghanistan.

It is, however, regrettable that the leaders of the various factions have failed to set aside their differences in the broader interests of their people and to demonstrate political will and a genuine desire for peace. Consequently, the risk of a renewed major confrontation among the contending forces, with its attendant destructive consequences for the civilian population, remains a distinct possibility. The situation is further aggravated by external interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, which has immeasurably complicated efforts to restore peace and stability.

The presidential statement of last February fully reflected the genuine concern of the Security Council and

called upon the parties concerned to terminate hostilities and to lift the blockade of Kabul, so as to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid and other desperately needed supplies to the beleaguered population. My delegation has also associated itself with the Council's support for the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, which offers the only hope for ending the bloodshed through the establishment of a broadly based transitional government acceptable to the Afghan people.

Along with the timely and balanced recommendations of the Council and the Secretary-General to promote a negotiated settlement in Afghanistan, my delegation wishes to underscore the proposals that were advanced at the Twenty-third Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers, held in Conakry last December. In particular, we fully agree that the time has come for the launching of a credible intra-Afghan dialogue to restore peace and stability and to revive the political, economic, social and institutional infrastructure of Afghan society.

To achieve the goal of lasting peace and tranquillity, we call upon the parties concerned to extend their full and unstinting cooperation to all personnel engaged in humanitarian aid, in full conformity with the precepts of international humanitarian law. We appeal to all States to refrain from engaging in activities that would hamstring the ongoing endeavours for a peaceful solution, especially in preventing the flow of weapons to the parties in conflict. Furthermore, in the light of the close proximity of Afghanistan to a number of countries, my delegation would encourage regional endeavours in assisting and augmenting the peace process.

While these endeavours have in the past met with setbacks, the Council should none the less be steadfast in its determination to overcome the fratricidal aspects of the conflict, which alone would facilitate progress towards peace in that beleaguered country. However, the cornerstone of the edifice for peace must necessarily rest on the development of an intra-Afghan mechanism. At the same time, we must not lose sight of the fact that humanitarian conditions are inextricably linked to peace and stability and will therefore continue to require extensive input from the international community. As such, we cannot foresee the prospect of an enduring peace taking hold in an environment of profound human deprivation, fear and insecurity.

While it is my delegation's earnest hope that the Council and the Secretary-General will remain actively engaged in assisting the parties to achieve national reconciliation, the ultimate responsibility for peace resides with the leaders of Afghanistan. It is up to them to resolve their differences in a peaceful and democratic manner. We do not, however, support the imposition of peace, as that would violate the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, to which Indonesia is fully committed. It is therefore our firm belief that a lasting peace can result only from the determination of the parties concerned to engage in a constructive dialogue based on compromise and cooperation.

In closing, my delegation wishes to express the hope that our concerted efforts can, as they should, make a decisive contribution to the ongoing peace efforts in Afghanistan. If we choose, however, to shrink from our solemn responsibility and abandon the people of Afghanistan, then we should expect a loss of the Council's credibility. We should therefore remain seized of the situation in Afghanistan until the suffering, which has been the only life many Afghans have come to know, is alleviated and a lasting peace takes hold.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Indonesia for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Gnehm (United States of America): Afghan leaders who were once united have turned against each other. That civil war continues even today, seven years later, with Afghans still fighting Afghans. Although some of the players have changed and alliances have shifted, the outcome is the same: military stalemate. And the real victims have been the Afghan people, who continue to suffer unending devastation and violence.

The United States supports the peace efforts of United Nations special envoy Mahmoud Mestiri, who is now back in the region seeking reconciliation between the major factions. We understand Ambassador Mestiri is moving his mission to Jalalabad. We view this as a very positive step. It should help facilitate closer and more frequent contacts with the various groups.

We believe that the vast majority of Afghans want moderation and do not support extremism. They, and we, want a broadly supported, capable central government in Kabul that will begin the task of rebuilding the country, the economy and commerce, the infrastructure, and the educational and judicial systems.

The United States favours none of the factions, movements or individuals currently vying for power in Afghanistan. Let me be very clear on this matter, particularly because there are many erroneous media reports about it. We do not supply weapons or other military or financial support to any of these factions or movements.

Although the United States does not support any particular group, we have continued to provide the people of Afghanistan with humanitarian assistance that is largely channelled through United Nations agencies and private voluntary organizations. This aid mainly has been targeted for refugee care and repatriation and to support demining operations. Some very limited funding goes for anti-narcotics efforts. Since 1989 the United States has provided some $700 million in humanitarian assistance. The aid figure for last year alone was nearly $50 million.

Today the Security Council has the opportunity to explore what actions it might take to further encourage this process of reconciliation and to achieve progress towards a peaceful political settlement. But neither the Security Council, the United Nations nor the international community can create peace in Afghanistan. Only when the parties have the political will to make peace, to end this war of all against all, will Afghanistan be able to build its way to stability and reconciliation.

We call upon all the Afghan factions and the outside parties that support them with funds and weapons to realize the futility of continuing the conflict in Afghanistan. A military solution will not and cannot provide a lasting peace. In Afghanistan, where the economy has been totally shattered, many Afghan men take up arms only because they have no other way to earn a living to support their families. It is imperative, therefore, that the armed factions make a serious commitment to speak directly to their enemies.

We understand that efforts have been under way for months to achieve reconciliation among the groups. The United States, like many Western, Islamic and other nations, stands ready to contribute to that task. However, rebuilding cannot begin until there is a true peace. We want an immediate end to the fighting. There needs to be a cease-fire and progress towards a comprehensive peace plan.

There are a number of ideas which have been floated as means to achieve the desired end in Afghanistan. I repeat that each one requires the political will of the various factions. The United States wishes to work closely with other concerned countries to explore what more the United Nations can do at this critical juncture to bring about a lasting peace. We renew our call that all outside parties desist from providing weapons or any other assistance to the armed factions.

We are aware that several countries are considering an arms embargo against Afghanistan. The United States believes this is worth exploring further, if it could be effectively implemented. We should also discuss the prospects for convening a conference on Afghanistan that could help accelerate the peace process. It is essential to create a forum in which the legitimate aspirations of the vast majority of the Afghan people can be expressed and where a mechanism for governing can be established.

The United Nations will do what it can to bring the Afghan parties together, but in the end it is up to those parties who are waging war to choose the other road, the one that will bring peace and reconciliation, at last, to Afghanistan.

Sir John Weston (United Kingdom): Like previous speakers, we welcome the opportunity to discuss the situation in Afghanistan, and to hear the views of countries directly affected. We hope this debate will send a signal to the people of Afghanistan that theirs is not a forgotten conflict and that this meeting will mark the beginning of a renewed push for peace.

The tragic humanitarian situation, especially in Kabul, has caused all Security Council members to look with renewed determination at the problems of Afghanistan. The international community has a duty to do all it can. The United Kingdom continues to provide assistance; we have spent more than £100 million on humanitarian aid since 1980.

The concern is not just humanitarian. Countries such as the United Kingdom have a real and increasing interest in an Afghanistan at peace with itself. Seventy per cent of Europe's heroin comes from Afghanistan. The territory of Afghanistan is increasingly used to train terrorists whose activities have consequences far beyond that country's borders. An unstable Afghanistan represents a threat to the stability of a region which is of great importance to us.

It is unfortunately the case that no solution is in sight. No amount of international pressure can compensate for a lack of commitment by the parties

within Afghanistan. But we must not become frustrated. We believe that the United Nations remains the best hope for progress. The General Assembly resolution adopted by consensus at the fiftieth session, reaffirmed the commitment of all the members to Afghanistan and the readiness of the United Nations to assist the people of Afghanistan in their efforts to achieve national reconciliation. The statement by the President of the Security Council on 14 February reiterated the Council's concern. We continue to call upon all Afghan parties to begin to make the compromises, and to show the flexibility, without which peace will never be possible.

The Special Mission headed by Ambassador Mestiri is faced with an extremely challenging task. We continue to support his efforts. We regret that the Mission has often been forced to adopt a wait-and-see attitude. Ambassador Mestiri recently returned to the region. This is welcome. There is a need for new impetus. We support the Secretary-General's intention to strengthen the Mission within existing resources. We agree with the Secretary-General's conclusion in his report (A/50/908) on Afghanistan that it may be necessary to explore additional ways and means to facilitate the realization of a lasting settlement and peace in Afghanistan. We look forward to hearing more about the proposal for an international conference and how it might play a useful role in forging a durable peace. Clearly, the time will have to be right and the agenda clear if such a meeting is to play a positive role.

We have only just received the Secretary-General's report. We will wish to reflect on it and on the views expressed in this debate, and to consider how further the Council may be able to help. But I wish to put on record now our particular concern at the Secretary-General's assessment that foreign interference by countries in the region and beyond, both military and political, has been increasing. There can be no excuse for this. We need to look carefully for ways to prevent further such interference. We call again for an end to the disastrous flow of weapons into Afghanistan. Peace cannot be won by force of arms; it can only be won when the arms are laid down and Afghans themselves accept that reconciliation is the only way forward.

Mr. Legwaila (Botswana): Allow me, Sir, to join preceding speakers in congratulating you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council for this month. I wish you every success in your work.

I would also like to thank all speakers for the kind words addressed to me and to my delegation.

We are grateful to the Secretariat for the regular briefings which have kept members of the Security Council informed on the developments in Afghanistan. The report (A/50/908) of the Secretary-General issued pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/88 B is both realistic and balanced. We share in the military, political and humanitarian analysis of the situation contained in the report as well as the main thrust of its recommendations.

The war in Afghanistan constitutes one of the most serious and tragic challenges facing the international community today. The civil war in that country has continued unabated for more than 17 years, with disastrous consequences, particularly for the civilian population. No section of the population has been spared the terror and destruction.

We are especially concerned about the absolute contempt with which the fundamental human rights of the civilian population are being treated. International human rights organizations have documented numerous abuses being perpetrated against civilians, including the bombings of residential areas, particularly in Kabul, deliberate and arbitrary killings, extrajudicial executions, detention and torture. Large segments of the population have been forcibly displaced and their property destroyed. In short, the overall humanitarian situation in the country is tragically appalling.

The human tragedy that is Afghanistan derives its sustenance from the unyielding determination of the parties to resolve their differences by force. We do not believe that the crisis in Afghanistan, like others elsewhere, can be resolved by the use of force. It should long ago have dawned on the warring factions in Afghanistan that the military option, despite the untold suffering that it has visited upon the Afghan people, has taken them no nearer to a solution of their national crisis than when they first instituted it. We appeal to them to refrain from taking any further military initiatives and to begin the process of negotiation for a political settlement. They should realise that the ultimate responsibility for peace and national reconciliation, or continued war and destruction, in Afghanistan rests with nobody but themselves.

What the ordinary Afghans need most today is a peaceful and stable country in which they can be afforded an opportunity to rebuild their shattered lives. They do

not need guns and still more guns to slaughter more and more of their own people. They need the support and encouragement of the international community, especially the neighbouring countries, to start a new process of negotiation aimed at finding a durable political solution to the crisis in their country. The people of Afghanistan have demonstrated on an earlier occasion that they are capable of sitting around a negotiating table and discussing peace and national reconciliation. They were on the verge of success, but for the decision of some to renege on the agreed timetable within which general elections were to be held.

We therefore believe that, given the right political atmosphere, the people of Afghanistan are capable of mustering adequate political will to negotiate another agreement, and for this they look to their neighbours for statesmanship and help — help of the helpful kind. Unfortunately, they are most unlucky in this respect. Their neighbours are as divided as the Afghans themselves, if not more so, over the crisis in Afghanistan, and have chosen to support one or the other of the Afghan warring factions instead of to reconcile them. The factions are being trained and armed in the neighbouring countries, which seem indifferent to the human tragedy being fuelled by their actions. The countries in the region should be concentrating their efforts on helping the people of Afghanistan to find peace, and not fanning the fires of hostility and war. They should refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and cease the supply of arms to that country.

It is clear from the disposition of the neighbouring countries that the conflict in Afghanistan poses a serious threat to both regional and international peace and security. Yet the response of the international community to this crisis with clear international ramifications has generally been muted.

There are other dimensions to the Afghan conflict that deserve to be mentioned, albeit in passing. The use of the territory of Afghanistan for the illicit trade in drugs and the fact that there will be no easy solutions to the inter-Tajik conflict so long as Afghanistan is at war with itself are cases in point.

It is for all these reasons that my delegation believes that the United Nations should have creatively responded to the situation in Afghanistan much earlier. It is time the United Nations broke the vicious circle of reacting to conflicts after they have degenerated into unmanageable, bitter-end civil wars. It was clear from the beginning that the neighbouring States were not going to cooperate to find a lasting solution to the Afghan crisis, and that the Security Council should have moved with speed to establish a confidence-restoration mission in Afghanistan when the prospects for holding general elections in accordance with the Islamabad Accord became bleak. At that point, positions had not yet hardened, the consent of the factions would not have been difficult to attain and trust and confidence could have been restored.

We hope, however, that a cease-fire can still be established in Afghanistan, which the United Nations could follow up with the dispatch of a fact-finding mission to review the situation and recommend the feasibility or otherwise of establishing a visible United Nations presence in the country, however limited in scope. The purpose of such a United Nations presence would be to help the Afghans to prepare and hold general elections and thus avoid a repetition of the events which led to the present crisis. A general arms embargo would be put in place throughout the territory of Afghanistan prior to the elections. The neighbouring States would have to be strongly persuaded to observe the provisions of the arms embargo for the sake of peace in Afghanistan.

This is but one suggestion among many that can be employed to halt the war and bring about a lasting political solution to the crisis in Afghanistan. It may prove to be the least feasible in the political atmosphere prevailing in Afghanistan today, but any solution which does not include the establishment of a cease-fire and negotiations for a new political dispensation would be equally unrealistic.

In short, there can be no excuse for failure to respond to this tragic situation. The success of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security depends, to a large extent, on its ability to respond creatively and meaningfully to all crisis situations at every stage of their development. Doing nothing is the only option that should be excluded in the search for solutions to crises. And we do not believe that the international community is about to do nothing in Afghanistan.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Botswana for his kind words addressed to me.

We have come to the end of this morning's meeting. There are a number of speakers remaining on my list. As agreed in prior consultations, I shall now adjourn the meeting. The Council will continue its consideration of the item on the agenda this afternoon at 3 p.m.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.